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WORK OF THE COMMISSION OF SOUTHERN UNIVERSITIES ON THE RACE QUESTION

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Unquestionably the problem of the economic, social, hygienic, educational, moral, and civic uplift of the Negro race is at present challenging the best thought of Southern scholars and philanthropists, as perhaps no other problem is.

There are now many agencies in the South trying to find a method of helping the Negro get a larger share of the fruits of his toil and enabling him to live his life more abundantly and more harmoniously with the Southern white man. The first and, perhaps, the most potent of these agencies is the Commission on Southern Race Questions, organized by Dr. James H. Dillard, of New Orleans, president and director of the Anna T. Jeanes Foundation, at the First Southern Sociological Congress, which met in Nashville, Tenn., May 7 to 10, 1912. The membership of this commission is as follows: W. S. Sutton, dean and professor of education, University of Texas; James E. Doster, dean of the School of Education, University of Alabama; James M. Parr, vice-president and professor of English, University of Florida; R. H. J. DeLoach, professor of cotton industry, University of Florida; W. O. Scroggs, professor of economics and sociology, University of Louisiana; W. D. Hedleston, professor of ethics and sociology, University of Mississippi; Charles W. Bain, professor of Greek, University of North Carolina; Josiah Morse, professor of philosophy, University of South Carolina; James D. Hoskins, dean and professor of history and economics, University of Tennessee; William M. Hunley, adjunct professor of political science, University of Virginia; Charles Hillman Brough, professor of economics and sociology, University of Arkansas. Dr. Brough is chairman of the commission and Professor Hunley secretary.

At its first meeting at Nashville, Dr. Dillard outlined his purpose in calling such a body of teachers together. He significantly

called attention to the fact that the leadership of state universities in the South is coming to be more and more vital to the interests of the people; that they have been criticised often for apparent indifference to the Negro question, and that not only stimulation, but also actual leadership, was expected of the commission.

After an informal discussion it was decided to hold the next meeting at Athens, Ga., December 19, 1912, when each member was expected to present a plan. Practically all of the members of the commission were in attendance on this meeting, which convened in the library room of the historic and antebellum University of Georgia. Additional value was given to the deliberations of the commission by the presence and active participation of Chancellor Barrow, of the University of Georgia, and Chancellor Kincannon, of the University of Mississippi. The most important business transacted at this meeting was the delegation by the chairman of specific work to special committees, which are to report next December at Richmond, Va. The composition of these committees is as follows:

Education—Sutton, chairman; Farr, Doster.

Economic—DeLoach, chairman; Hoskins, Brough.

Hygiene—Morse, chairman; Hedleston, Bain.

Civic—Scroggs, chairman; Hunley, Sutton.

Religious—Doster, chairman; Hedleston, Morse.

Race Adjustment—Farr, chairman; Bain, Hunley.

Executive—Brough, chairman; Farr, and Hunley, Secretary.

Advisory—Dillard, chairman; Chancellor Barrow, of Georgia, and President Mitchell, South Carolina.

A number of the members of these committees submitted preliminary reports at the second sociological congress, which met in Atlanta, Ga., the latter part of last April. The work already done presages the most scientific and impartial study of the Negro problem, with the ideal of constructive helpfulness, that has yet been attempted.

As one of the results of the organization of this commission a number of students, notably at the University of Virginia and the University of Georgia, began last fall a systematic study of the Negro problem in all its phases. They started under the auspices of the Young Men's Christian Association. Tremendous impetus was given their work by the establishment of the Phelps-Stokes

fellowships at the Universities of Virginia and Georgia. Practically all the Southern universities represented on the commission are offering courses on the Negro question, using such scholarly works as Weatherford's *Negro Life in the South* and Stone's *Studies in the Race Problem* as texts, and these courses in the regular curricula are being supplemented by special Y. M. C. A. courses on various phases of Negro life.

Some idea of the extent of the work undertaken by these students may be had from the report of last year's study at the University of Virginia. This group of students, numbering nearly one hundred, issued a summary of the results of their study, in part as follows:

"1. A realization of the pervasiveness of the problem; that in reality it is not an isolated situation out of touch with the affairs of the South at large, but an intimate, ever-present problem touching the life of the South at every turn, and involving the hygienic, economic, and moral well-being of every citizen of the South.

"2. Not only has the problem been recognized, but much reading has been done and much thought devoted to the subject. More than one hundred volumes were taken from the library by students of this question.

"3. Through lectures, books, and current magazines the men of the group have come in contact with the leading thinkers and workers in the field of sociological endeavor.

"4. A library of more than four hundred volumes has been accumulated and completely catalogued for use, and additions are continually being made.

"5. Actual investigation has been made and a foundation laid for future work of greater scope and value.

"6. Virginia has assumed a leadership in this, the largest problem of Southern life, that has attracted wide attention and excited emulation."

The writer feels that he can best express his ideas as to the activities and opportunities of the commission by reproducing portions of his address before the commission, at its meeting in Athens, Ga., last December.

The South is to be congratulated on the fact that she has educational statesmen with far-sighted and philanthropic vision, of the type of Dr. J. H. Dillard, of New Orleans, who has consecrated his

ripe experience and able executive leadership to the social, economic, educational, religious, and civic improvement of the Negro race. Such a leader, who is the inspiration and originator of this commission of professors from representative Southern universities, is worth infinitely more to our nation, to our Southland, and to our sovereign states, than a thousand ranting demagogues.

With such an inspiring force as Dr. Dillard, I feel that this commission could do no better than follow his splendid constructive outline which he has mapped out for our work and, therefore, as chairman of the commission, I invite suggestions in the following subjects:

I. What are the conditions?

- (a) Religious—contributions, excessive denominationalism, lack of the practical in preaching, etc.
- (b) Educational—self-help, Northern contributions, public schools, etc.
- (c) Hygienic—whole question of health and disease.
- (d) Economic—land ownership, business enterprises, abuse of credit system, etc.
- (e) Civic—common carriers, courts of justice, franchise, etc.

Changes and tendencies in the above conditions.

Attitude of the whites.

II. What should and can be done, especially by whites, for improvement?

III. What may be hoped as to future conditions and relations?

With reference to the religious contributions to the betterment of the Negro, it may be said that our churches have been pursuing a "penny-wise and pound-foolish economy." The Presbyterians last year gave an average of three postage stamps per member to the work. The Methodists averaged less than the price of a cheap soda water—just a five-cent one. The Southern Baptist convention has only been asking from its large membership \$15,000 annually for this tremendous work. In view of these conditions, as Southern churchmen we may well echo the passionately eloquent outburst of Dr. W. D. Weatherford, one of the most profound thinkers and virile writers on the Negro question and the leader of the young men of the South in their Y. M. C. A. work, "Do we mean to say by our niggardly gifts that these people are helpless and worthless in the sight of God? Do we mean to say that 1 cent per member

is doing our share in evangelizing the whole race? God pity the Southern Christians, the Southern churches, and the Southern States, if we do not awake to our responsibility in this hour of opportunity."

But the responsibility for deplorable religious conditions among the Negroes is not altogether with the whites. While it is true that the Negro is by nature a religious and emotional animal, while there are approximately 4,500,000 church members among the 10,000,000 Negroes in the United States, and these churches represent property values of nearly \$40,000,000, yet it is also painfully true that excessive denominationalism and ecclesiastical rivalry and dissensions prevent the formation of strong, compact organizations among them and, as a result, there are twice as many church organizations as there should be, congregations are small, and the salaries paid their preachers are not large enough to secure competent men.

In connection with the character of the average Negro preacher, it is interesting to note that in an investigation made by Atlanta University concerning the character of the Negro ministry, of 200 Negro laymen who were asked their opinion of the moral character of Negro preachers, only thirty-seven gave decided answers of approval. Among faults mentioned by these Negro laymen were selfishness, deceptiveness, love of money, sexual impurity, dogmatism, laziness, and ignorance, and to these may be added the fact that preaching is generally of a highly emotional type and is wholly lacking in any practical moral message. At the April meeting of the Southern Sociological Congress, I trust that some one will discuss the necessity of holding up before the Negroes the conception of the Perfect Man of Galilee of unblemished character and spotless purity, who went about doing good, as well as the conception of a Savior of power and a Christ of divinity.

Educationally the Negroes of the South have made remarkable progress. In 1880, of the Negro population above ten years of age, 70 per cent was illiterate. By the end of the next decade, this illiteracy had been reduced to 57.1 per cent, and by the close of the century, it had declined to 44.5 per cent. During the last ten years of the nineteenth century, there was an increase of the Negro population of 1,087,000 in the school age of ten years and over, yet, despite this increase, there was a decrease in illiteracy of 190,000. In 1912, there are over 2,000,000 between the ages of five and eighteen, or 54 per cent of the total number of educable Negro

children, enrolled in the common schools of the former slave states, and the percentage of illiteracy among the Negroes is only 27.5 per cent.

In the state of Arkansas for the year ending June 30, 1912, 109,731 Negro children were enrolled in the common schools out of a total educable Negro population of 175,503, and the percentage of illiteracy among the Negroes was only 26.2 per cent. Besides the Branch Normal at Pine Bluff, maintained by the state at an annual expense of \$15,000, an institution which has graduated 236 Negro men and women in the thirty-eight years of its useful history, and six splendid Negro high schools at Fort Smith, Helena, Hot Springs, Little Rock, and Pine Bluff, there are six denominational high schools and colleges in Arkansas that are giving the Negroes an academic education and practical instruction in manual training, domestic science, practical carpentry, and scientific agriculture. These facts tell the story of praiseworthy sacrifice, frugality, struggle and aspiration.

The amount devoted to Negro education in the South for the forty years, ending with the academic session 1910-11, is approximately \$166,000,000. Of this amount the Negro is beginning to pay a fair proportion, especially in North Carolina and Virginia. But the Southern white people have borne the brunt of the burden, meriting the stately eulogy of the late lamented commissioner of education, William T. Harris, that "the Southern white people in the organization and management of systems of public schools manifest wonderful and remarkable self-sacrifice," and also the tribute of Dr. Lyman Abbott, editor of the *Outlook*, "while Northern benevolence has spent tens of thousands in the South to educate the Negroes, Southern patriotism has spent hundreds of thousands of dollars for the same purpose. This has been done voluntarily and without aid from the federal government."

The South as a whole has appreciated the truth of the six axioms in the programme of Negro education so admirably set forth by Dr. W. S. Sutton, of the University of Texas, in a recent bulletin, and she boldly affirms that the highest welfare of the "black child of Providence" committed to her keeping lies not in social or even political equality but in equality of industrial opportunity and educational enlightenment. Therefore, if the dangerous and insidious movement for the segregation of the school funds between

the races in proportion to the amount paid in as taxes is to be checked, the Negro must awake more keenly to the necessity of self-help, realizing that

Self-ease is pain, thy only rest
Is labor for a worthy end;
A toil that gives with what it yields,
And hears, while sowing outward fields,
The harvest song of inward peace.

In the problem of Negro education, the keystone of the arch is the rural school, which has been shamefully neglected. Dr. Dillard, by his wise administration of the Jeanes and Slater Funds, has rendered an invaluable service in the improvement of rural Negro schools, employing at the present time 117 supervisors in 119 Southern counties at an average annual salary of \$301.38 to competent teachers who coöperate with the county examiners and superintendents in the supervision of Negro schools. The question has been raised by Honorable George B. Cook, superintendent of public instruction in Arkansas, as to whether these supervisors and the funds for their employment should not be placed under the immediate control of the state departments of education by Dr. Dillard, and I respectfully submit this as a fruitful subject for discussion by this commission.

Closely allied to the proper solution of the problem of Negro education are the practical questions of better hygienic conditions and housing, the reduction of the fearful mortality rate now devastating the race, and the prevention of disease. At present the death rate of the Negroes is 28 per 1,000, as opposed to 15 per 1,000 for the whites. The chief causes of this excessive death rate among the Negroes seem to be infant mortality, scrofula, venereal troubles, consumption, and intestinal diseases. According to Hoffman, over 50 per cent of the Negro children born in Richmond, Va., die before they are one year old. This is due primarily to sexual immorality, enfeebled constitutions of parents, and infant starvation, all of which can be reduced by teaching the Negroes the elementary laws of health.

The highest medical authorities agree that the Negro has a predisposition to consumption, due to his small chest expansion and the insignificant weight of his lungs (only four ounces), and this

theory seems to be borne out by the fact that the excess of Negro deaths over whites from consumption is 105 per cent in the representative Southern cities. But however strong the influence of heredity it is undeniable that consumption, the hookworm, and fevers of all kinds are caused in a large measure by the miserable housing conditions prevalent among the Negroes. Poor housing, back alleys, no ventilation, poor ventilation, and no sunshine do much to foster disease of all kinds.

Furthermore, people cannot be moral as long as they are herded together like cattle without privacy or decency. If a mother, a father, three grown daughters, and men boarders have to sleep in two small rooms, as is frequently the case, we must expect lack of modesty, promiscuity, illegitimacy and sexual diseases. It is plainly our duty to preach the gospel of hygienic evangelism to our unfortunate "neighbors in black," for the Ciceronian maxim, *Mens sana in corpore sano*, is fundamental in education. Certainly, he who is instrumental in causing the Negro to build two and three-room houses where only a one-room shack stood before and to construct one sleeping porch where none was before deserves more at the hands of his fellowman than the whole race of demagogues put together.

Economic progress has been the handmaid of educational enlightenment in the improvement of the Negro. Indeed, to the Negro the South owes a debt of real gratitude for her rapid agricultural growth, and in no less degree does every true son of the South owe the Negro a debt of gratitude for his unselfishness, his faithfulness, and his devotion to the white people of Dixieland not only during the dark and bloody days of the Civil War but during the trying days of our industrial and political renaissance.

To the Negro, either as an independent owner, tenant, or laborer we partly owe the increase in the number of our farms from 504,000 in 1860 to over 2,000,000 at the present time; the increase in our farm values from \$2,048,000 in 1860 to \$4,500,000 at the present time; the decrease in the size of our farm unit from 321 acres in 1860 to 84 acres at the present time.

In this substantial progress of our glorious Southland, the Negro has had a distinct and commendable share. It has been estimated by workers in the census bureau that in 1890 Negroes were cultivating, either as owners, tenants, or hired laborers, one hundred million acres of land, and at the present time the estimated value

of property owned by Negroes in the United States is \$750,000,000. Of the 214,678 farmers in Arkansas in 1910, 63,593, or almost 30 per cent, are Negroes, and of these Negro farmers, 14,662, or 23 per cent were owners and 48,885, or 77 per cent, were tenants. In the United States as a whole at the period of the last decennial census, there were 2,143,176 Negroes engaged in farming; 1,324,160 in domestic and personal service; 275,149 in manufacturing and mechanical pursuits; 209,154 in trade and transportation, and 47,324 in professional service—a remarkable showing for a race that emerged barely three centuries ago from the night of African darkness and depravity.

However, there are four well defined retarding forces to the fullest economic development of the Negro in the South, and to these evils this commission should give thoughtful and earnest consideration—the tenant system, the one crop system, the abuse of the credit system, and rural isolation. I believe that industrial education, teaching the Negro the lessons of the nobility of toil, the value of thrift and honesty, the advantages attaching to the division of labor and the diversification of industry, and the dangers lurking in the seductive credit system, will prove an effective panacea for these self-evident evils.

Therefore, as a Southern man, born, raised, and educated in the proud commonwealth of Mississippi, I welcome the splendid efforts of such men as Booker T. Washington, of the Tuskegee Institute; Major Morton, of Hampton Institute; Joseph Price, of Livingston College, North Carolina; Charles Banks and Isaiah Montgomery, of Mississippi; and Joseph A. Booker and E. T. Venegar, of Arkansas; in behalf of the industrial education of their race.

As the sons of proud Anglo-Saxon sires, we of the South doubt seriously the wisdom of the enfranchisement of an inferior race. We believe that reconstruction rule was “a reign of ignorance, mongrelism, and depravity,” that the Negro is the cheapest voter and the greatest Bourbon in American politics, North and South alike, and that as a political factor he has been a disturbing factor in our civic life. Personally, I believe in the Mississippi educational qualification test for suffrage, sanely administered, with as much ardor as in a literacy test for foreign immigration.

However, “a condition and not a theory confronts us.” As an American citizen the Negro is entitled to life, liberty and the pur-

suit of happiness and the equal protection of our laws for the safeguarding of these inalienable rights. The regulation of suffrage in the South, as well as in the North, is and always will be determined by the principle of expediency. But none but the most prejudiced Negro-hater, who often times goes to the extreme of denying that any black man can have a white soul, would controvert the proposition that in the administration of quasi-public utilities and courts of justice, the Negro is entitled to the fair and equal protection of the law. Separate coach laws are wise, but discriminations in service are wrong.

If "law hath her seat in the bosom of God and her voice in the harmony of the world, all things paying obeisance to her, the greatest are not exempt from her power and the least as feeling her protecting care," if

Sovereign law, the state's collected will,
Sits empress, crowning good, repressing ill,

then the meanest Negro on a Southern plantation is entitled to the same consideration in the administration of justice as the proudest scion of a cultured cavalier.

It is, indeed, a travesty on Anglo-Saxon jurisprudence to send a Negro to the penitentiary for a term of eighteen years for selling a gallon of whiskey in violation of law and at the same time allow scores of white murderers to go unpunished, as was recently stated to be a fact by a governor of a Southern state. Even if it be only theoretically true that "all people are created free and equal," and if, as a practical proposition, the Negro is a "Ham-sandwich for the Caucasian race," it is undeniably true that he is entitled to the equal protection of our laws and to the rights safeguarded every American citizen under the beneficent provisions of the Constitution of the United States.

If I may use the eloquent words of the golden-tongued, clear-visioned, and lion-hearted Bishop Charles B. Galloway, "The race problem is no question for small politicians, but for broad-minded patriotic statesmen. It is not for non-resident theorists, but for clear-visioned humanitarians. All our dealings with the Negro should be in the spirit of the Man of Galilee."

The task confronting this commission, composed of Southern white men and representing the universities of the South, is Atlan-

tean in its magnitude, and fraught with tremendous significance. I believe that ours is a noble mission, that of discussing the ways and means of bettering the religious, educational, hygienic, economic, and civic condition of an inferior race. I believe that by protesting against the miscegenation of the races we can recognize the sacredness of the individual white and the individual Negro and do much to preserve that racial integrity recently jeopardized by the Johnson-Cameron missalliance. I believe that by preaching the gospel of industrial education to the whites and Negroes alike we can develop a stronger consciousness of social responsibility. I believe that by the recognition of the fact that in the Negro are to be found the essential elements of human nature, capable of conscious evolution through education and economic and religious betterment, we will be led at last to a conception of a world of unity, whose Author and Finisher is God.